Allegheny County Department of Human Services

Allegheny County Department of Human Services Helpful Resources

How to Help Clients Access Free WiFi and Laptops

Overview

Since the beginning of Covid-19, DHS staff and providers have been using software such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and Google Classroom to reach clients. Helping clients get access to devices, connectivity, and training is essential to keep them connected with services, education, and information. Please use the following resources to help clients access the internet and use digital tools to stay engaged with us.

Internet Access

DHS Hotspots

DHS can provide hotspot devices to clients in need if supplies last. These are T-Mobile hotspots with unlimited data that are pre-paid for at least one year.
Please fill out this short form to request a hotspot device from Allegheny County DHS:
https://alleghenycounty.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_elnE3Uh0xKP6y3P

Other Options

Comcast Internet Essentials provides low-cost in-home internet service to households that qualify.

- The simplest, fastest, and easiest way to the apply for the program is from a mobile device at www.InternetEssentials.com. Call 1-855-8-INTERNET (1-855-846-8376) if you are having trouble signing up with your smartphone. Call centers are busy at this time, so use the virtual hold option to avoid losing minutes, and a Comcast representative will call you back.

Verizon will now offer new Lifeline eligible individuals, Fios (with Disney+ for a year) for $19.99/month at speeds of 200/200. Limitations apply.

- For program details, visit their Lifeline webpage. For answers to your questions, see Verizon's COVID-19 FAQs.
- Verizon customers who have lifeline as of March 20, 2020 will have all billing charges waived for 60 days (two billing cycles) beginning with the 3/22/2020 bills. These will apply to either a home phone or Verizon broadband internet service.

Other Cell Service Providers (Sprint, T-Mobile, Boost, AT&T, etc.)

- In response to Covid-19, many cell phone service providers are offering discounted data plans that enable hotspot connectivity. Customers should call their cell phone provider to inquire about mobile hotspot data availability.

- How to turn your phone into a hotspot

Free Public Wi-Fi

- Find public Wi-Fi options anywhere in Allegheny County at wifi.alleghenycounty.us or call 211, 24 hours a day to help you locate convenient public Wi-Fi.

Keeping data safe on public Wi-Fi

- Turn sharing preferences off when connected to a public network. You can do this on most operating systems by going to system preferences or control panel.

- Look for HTTPS at the beginning of a website's address. This means the personal data you're submitting to a website will be safe.

- Turn on the firewall. For Windows users: Control Panel > System and Security > Windows Firewall. For Mac users: System Preferences > Security and Privacy > Firewall.

- Use the latest version of the antivirus program installed on your device.

- Don't automatically connect.

- After using public Wi-Fi, check "forget network."

- It is best not to conduct financial transactions over public networks. Remember, you can use your smartphone as a hotspot or request a hotspot device from DHS.

Laptops

Many school districts have been distributing devices to students who need them. If a student needs a laptop, check with the appropriate school or school district first.

DHS will provide laptops to Allegheny County residents who have been active with DHS services in the last six months. This includes services provided by Children Youth and Families (CYF), Area Agency on Aging (AAA), and providers in the homelessness, behavioral and mental health services, intellectual disability, and drug and alcohol treatment networks.

Please fill out this short form to request a laptop from Allegheny County DHS:
https://alleghenycounty.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_elnE3Uh0xKP6y3P

Laptop FAQs

Who is eligible?
Any Allegheny County resident in need of a laptop who was active with DHS services within six months of applying.

What counts as a DHS service?
Any service provided by an organization within CYF, AAA and providers in the homelessness, behavioral and mental health services, intellectual disability, and drug and alcohol treatment networks.

How will clients get the laptop?
DHS stages no-contact laptop pick-ups most Fridays at the Human Services Building in downtown Pittsburgh, where providers or clients can get laptops in the parking lot. We can arrange drop-offs where needed.

What kind of laptop will they receive?
Most clients receive Chromebooks, but some may receive other models as donations become available.

What are the laptops for?
We anticipate that people will use laptops to interact with providers for activities such as teletherapy and to participate in education and training. The client may also use the laptop for general usage such as communication, information and entertainment.

Where can clients get technical support?
Call the University of Pittsburgh Community Technology Help Desk: (412) 383-0805 code 702 100 473# between 9am-5pm Monday-Friday. If a device encounters serious problems email covid19supplies@alleghenycounty.us

Does the laptop have to be returned?
No. The laptop is the clients to keep.